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## THE TRAINING OF THE NEGRO LABORER IN THE NORTH

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"All nations have their message from on high,  
Each the messiah of some central thought,  
For the fulfillment and delight of man;  
One has to teach that labor is divine;  
Another Freedom; and another Mind;  
And all, that God is open-eyed and just,  
The happy centre and calm heart of all."

An English colonist of South Africa, writing about the future of the native African in that section, says, "The natives must go; or they must work as laboriously to develop the land as we are prepared to do." Ex-President Harrison was accustomed to say, "The Indian has citizenship and a white man's chance offered to him, and must take it or perish." These two statements, I candidly believe, represent the attitude of the vast majority of the Anglo-Saxon race toward "retarded races." This attitude means that we, as a race, must "work as laboriously" and as successfully to overcome in the struggle for existence as the white man has done, or we must go—whether we dwell in dear old Africa or sojourn in other lands. What I should like to see expressed in every word and act of my race is the determination not to go—whether the going means annihilation or amalgamation. But, determining to stay, shall we labor to produce an imitation of a white man or a thoroughly developed black man? Shall our goal be an artificial flower or a naturally developed wild flower? Or, to be specific, shall citizenship *de jure* and *de facto* in these United States be the end of the colored man's efforts in social and political development, or the means by which he shall become the founder and builder of a developed African nation? Should the thoughtful colored men—whether pure black or mixed blood—come out into the open and answer honestly this aim-settling question, the Negro problem would become clarified and

we could call a spade a spade, and the adjustment of the races would become an easier proposition. For myself, I stand for a developed African race in Africa and, to me, the United States is the greatest of the schools from which the founders and builders of this African nation are to be graduated. This race lesson, which I learned first at my mother's knee, has been confirmed by the observations and experiences of my life in this country, in Europe, and in Africa.

I accepted the honor of an invitation to take part in the discussion of the topic, "The Training of the Negro Laborer in the North," before this distinguished Academy, solely that I might, perchance, invite its thought to this view-point of the Negro problem and present some considerations which make the economic training of the Negro laborer a necessity.

I believe God has ordained of races, as well as of plants, that each shall bear fruit after its kind, and that the periods of maturity—fruit-bearing times—differ among races as they do among plants. I have, therefore, no patience with the sentimentalities, weak excuses, and grotesque imitations which flaunt themselves as solutions of a problem which, under God's Providence, must be solved by natural laws.

We have before us to-day the records of two and a half centuries of slavery in this country; the records of forty-three years of freedom in this country; quite an extensive knowledge of Africa and its peoples, and the records of the civilizations of the other races and peoples which inhabit the earth. The time has fully come for us to read our destiny in these records. We shall, however, most assuredly fail to discover God's purpose concerning us if we fix our attention upon any one, or any class of facts in our history or in these records. We must take in the whole range of His Providences if we would know by what path He leadeth us, and appreciate the design in any one of them.

Let me illustrate by the following story, which I heard while in Africa: A clerk in one of the European factories there was previously a member of a German military band. He carried his horn with him to Africa and regularly practiced alone the bass parts of the pieces which he had been accustomed to play at home. A native boy, who worked in the same factory, frequently expressed his surprise that the white man, who could do so many wonderful things, could not produce any better music than that which came

from the clerk's bass horn. It chanced that one of the agents took this lad to Hamburg, where he heard a full brass band. On his return he said to the clerk, in the English of the west coast of Africa, "Daddy, your horn no be fit for something by himself; but suppose you can blow him one time with all dem horns, he be fine plenty." It is only in the harmony of all our experiences that we appreciate the music of any one of them. Joseph in the pit; Joseph a chattel in the Ishmaelite's caravan; Joseph a slave in Potiphar's house; Joseph a common convict in the Egyptian jail, are single facts in which there is no music; but these several facts blending and harmonizing in Joseph the Prime Minister of Egypt and the saviour of Israel from starvation, produce rapturous music which lifts us to "a height from which we anticipate better ages;" to a height from which we comprehendingly and joyously swell the chorus when Shakespeare sings:

"Sweet are the uses of adversity,  
Which like the toad, ugly and venomous,  
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head."

To this height I would have every thoughtful Negro climb to-day, and from it interpret our present condition and environment in this country and learn that misfortunes, single or many, unrequited toils, and terrific violences in the life of a race, do not indicate that God has no gracious purpose concerning it, but that these are but the chastisements of a loving Father, made necessary by the stiff-neckedness of that race. Our view of the Negro problem, then would be comprehensive and racial. It would not be colored by impulses and desires born of selfishness and egotism, nor would it limit the time element of the individual reformer to the three score and ten years.

The development of a race or people is a process which requires not years, but centuries; the food on which it feeds requires such a long time to digest, and affords at each meal little real nutriment. Listen to this historical statement concerning the civilization of Europe. Says Guizot, "The history of the European civilization may be thrown into three great periods: First, a period which I shall call that of origin, or formation, during which the different elements of society disengaged themselves from chaos, assumed an existence, and showed themselves in their native forms, with the principles by

which they are animated; this period lasted almost till the twelfth century. The second period is a period of experiment, attempts, groping; the different elements of society approach and enter into combinations, feeling each other, as it were, but without producing anything general, regular or durable; this state of things, to say the truth, did not terminate until the sixteenth century. Then comes the third period, or the period of development, in which human society in Europe takes a definite form, follows a determinate direction, proceeds rapidly and with a general movement toward a clear and precise object; this began in the sixteenth century and is now running its course."

I am disposed often to look upon the proscriptions, discriminations and prejudices which we are made to feel at every turn in this country as a chastisement necessary to accomplish in us what the chastisements of the wilderness accomplished in the Jews. And I fear that we have, as yet, but tasted of the bitter waters of Marah; the deadly bite of the serpent is yet to come, unless, happily, our necks prove not so stiff as theirs and we become persuaded by gentler strokes in this, the formative period of our development, to learn, among others, the following vital and indispensable lessons:

1. We must come to know God as the God of our fathers. He must become to us Jehovah, a God perfecting that which he has begun in us; a God fulfilling the promises which he made to our fathers. We must come to understand and believe that blessings dispensed by Him are equally efficacious, whether we picture Him dispensing them with ebony black or lily white hands. Yea, we must come to know of a truth that He says to us, as a race, "If you obey My voice you shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me."

2. We must come to know ourselves. If the proper study of mankind is man, then we should specialize in the study of the black man. Our present progress has begun to create a demand for this knowledge, and the data for it is fast coming to hand.

When the Jew entered the wilderness all his types of civilization were Egyptian; but he did not wander long before he felt the necessity for types of his own: then he began to use the former as a means to an end. Like the old-fashioned pump-makers, he poured the water of the pumps in operation down the barrel of the new pump, to enable it to send forth its own. This lesson a kind Providence is teaching us now. All the lessons of civilization which we

learned in slavery and are now learning in freedom must be regarded by us as the water from the pump in operation, to be poured into the barrel of the new one. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life," is commanded of races as well as of individuals; and the inscription over the temple of learning is also the inscription over the gate which opens to the highway of a race's development, namely, "Know thyself."

It is, however, so much easier to live upon the crumbs that fall from the rich race's table than to raise the grain and make one's own bread that many are satisfied to eke out an existence in this way. But the time will come, under God's Providence, when these crumbs will produce nausea, and their starving bodies, minds and hearts will turn toward more appropriate and nutritious food. I am aware that this is a strange doctrine to those of my people who have grown fat on these crumbs and believe this fatness to be health. These men are not so wise as the foolish servant who wrapped his talent in a napkin and hid it. They give their talent at once to the man who has five, and are idiotic enough to believe that they will share the profits which he earns. If he who brought back all that his Lord gave him is accounted accursed, what shall be the lot of these? Tell me not that God has put millions of black men on this earth and given them a rich continent for no special purpose! Tell me, rather, what history teaches, that the black man has not yet reached that stage in his development where the idea of race mission enters—where races fall upon their faces and exclaim, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

3. We must come to know that the potentialities of a nation have been emplanté in us. In Egypt Israel was a family and a tribe: in the wilderness she became a nation. God made the black race for a nation. He is the Father of all nations and will be glorified by their differences. He has appointed different nations for different missions in the accomplishment of His purposes in this world. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit; diversities of workings, but the same God who worketh in all."

There is no malice against the white race in this view-point of the Negro problem, nor is there any antagonism to the efforts of the white people of this country to assist in our peculiar development. A nobler and more Christ-like body of laborers never entered the field for humanity than the white philanthropists and teachers who

started and, in many instances, are still carrying on the work of education among our people in the South—be these philanthropists and teachers northern or southern. On the contrary, their assistance from this view-point becomes more essential and effective, because it will touch our struggle only at points where the impossible, to us, presents itself. With the spirit of the Master before the tomb of Lazarus, these benevolent friends will do for us only that which we cannot do for ourselves, and they will require us to roll away the stone. Assistance rendered us in this wise will not interfere but hasten the accomplishment of the God-appointed mission of the black race. The duckling will take to the water, even though the hen furnish the warmth for its incubation. Confusion, incongruities and consequent waste of effort and means arise when the hen attempts to make a chick of the duckling.

We rejoice in the soul-stirring song which our white brother is still writing and singing to the world. What encouragement and enthusiasm it carries to those who are in the thickest of the struggle for life, and how the arches of heaven must ring with the strains of altruism which, ever and anon, burst forth to strengthen those who struggle for the life of others. But

“Because the nightingale so sweetly sings,  
Shall meadow-lark and hermit thrush be still?”

Give us not this song as a substitute for ours because ours is still unwritten. Rather, teach us the theory and practice of music and the art of composition, that we may write and sing ours. Teach us this in the spirit of the brotherhood of man, and we shall produce our song and sing it; not in opposition nor in competition, but as a part of that God-ordained variety which must be the charm of heaven as it is the spice of life on earth.

The Japanese who fifty years ago were known as little, harmless heathen, are to-day, in their same home, one of the first nations of the world. They gathered all over the western world the waters to start their pumps, and the life-giving and preserving value of the flow of these pumps has astounded the world. In God's appointed time the same will be true of the now heathen African, and the western waters which shall start the flow of his pumps will be carried back to Africa principally by American citizens of African descent. Already a band of Tuskegee graduates, under the auspices

of the German Government, has introduced cotton raising among the native Africans in Togo, Africa. I beg pardon for the personal allusion, but I consider it the greatest privilege of my life that, twenty years ago, I was permitted to furrow the ground for the seeds of industrial education in the Republic of Liberia.

In all due modesty, let me suggest that:

The soul which under the benumbing influences of slavery has given the world the Negro plantation melodies possesses a natural endowment too rich to be developed for any other mission than its own;

The slave who has supported and protected the wife and daughter of his master while the latter fought to perpetuate his slavery has too much altruism to sell his birthright at any price;

The man who has forgiven and forgotten so readily and willingly as has the Negro the most barbarous outrages on his wife and daughter has too much of the Christ-spirit to sail on the sea of life under any other colors than his own.

Let me affirm, in this connection, that the training in civilization, citizenship, and self-government which my people are receiving in this country will no more lead to the bugbear of Negro domination or the scarecrow of amalgamation than will a course in gymnastics lead to the change in the color of their skin. On the contrary, the desire to strike out for themselves will vary directly as this training.

Having stated my point of view, I wish now to refer briefly to the necessity for our training in the economic activities of your civilization. When I was in Africa I saw two farms; the first was worth twenty times its original purchasing price, and the second was worth simply its original cost. These farms had the same soil, the same climate, the same sunshine and rain, and were on the bank of the same river. What nature had done for one she had done also for the other; but the owner of the first farm had cleared it, set out coffee trees, cultivated them, cured and hulled the coffee bean, shipped the same to Europe and lived on the money returns; while the owner of the second farm had left it almost as he found it and lived on its wild products. When I came to know them, I found that these two men differed as much as did the farms. The difference in value between the two farms was due to the amount of work done on each by its owner, and the difference between the two men was due to the amount of work done on each by his farm. The first man was a



strong, vigorous physical specimen of humanity; every stroke of the axe, every stroke of the hoe, every pull of the rake, reacted on his body and made his muscles supple and strong, his digestion good. This man was also considered a strong man mentally; he was considered by his neighbors as a well-informed man, a man of good judgment; in his efforts to plant and cultivate a profitable coffee farm he had read all the literature and sought all the practical advice obtainable on this subject; he had tested this information in the practical management of his farm; he had gone further and experimented along lines which his actual observations had suggested; he had purchased and used implements employed in other countries on coffee farms; he had reconstructed some of these and made others of his own. All the thought and manipulation that he thus gave to the cultivation of his farm reacted upon his mind and made him what his neighbors considered him. Further, this man was looked up to as a man of good principles, a morally strong man. In the purchasing of the things required for the development of his farm and selling the harvest of the same he had bargained with other men, had been cheated and cheated others; but, bent on success, he learned first, amid these experiences, that honesty is the best policy, and, later on, became a disciple of the Golden Rule.

As I thought of these two men it seemed to me that the difference between them was, in a general way, from an economic standpoint at least, the difference between your race and mine. We have, practically, lived for centuries upon the wild products of Africa, while you have cut down the forests, gone down into the mines, crossed the seas, captured the forces of nature, made them do your bidding, and are now the strong and the conquering race that you are, by reason of the reaction on you of the work you have done on nature. So tremendous, so complex, and so subtle have become your efforts that you have outgrown the capacity of the organs of your senses, the medium of communication between you and nature. Why, if the instruments which you have invented to reinforce the natural capacities of these organs were destroyed, you would be as helpless in many departments of the activities of your civilization as a man deaf, dumb and blind. We have not yet reached the stage in our development which even suggests that the natural capacities of these organs are limited. The qualities contributing to social efficiency which you possess by reason of your achievements, viz., "such char-

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acteristics as strength and energy of character, probity and integrity and simple-minded devotion to conceptions of duty in such circumstances as arise," are attainable by us, and you, under God's Providence, have become our teachers and our trainers. You cannot legislate these qualities into us, nor can you preach them into us; but you can, and you should, secure for us "a free hand, a fair field, and a cordial God-speed" in the economic activities and avocations of your civilization; so that, struggling in these, we may develop such qualities. Work is the means by which you have succeeded and it is the only means by which we shall succeed. Our introduction to continuous work was in slavery in the Southern States. The climate was similar to Africa, vegetation was similar to the vegetation of Africa and the economic system was exceedingly simple. This condition permitted us to pass somewhat gradually from the work of gathering wild products to the work of cultivating these products. The reaction from the work in slavery produced the natural results, as benumbing and degrading as the system was. During slavery the mental element was a minimum and the moral element was present by precept only. I have no excuse to offer for slavery; nevertheless it has brought us into contact with a more advanced race, and whatever of civilization and development we now possess came to us by means of it. The blessings to Israel in Egypt were mightier than the hardships endured, and I am persuaded that we shall, by and by, acknowledge the same concerning our bondage in this country.

Since slavery the elements of self-help, self-direction and self-protection have entered into our work; but the change from unskilled labor to skilled labor has lagged far behind the natural and necessary demand on the part of my people for it. We have received about all the developing influences which can come to us as a reaction from unskilled labor, and we stand face to face to-day in this country with the tragic situation of a race shut out from the only economic means which will secure its natural development in its present stage—the opportunity to learn and practice skilled labor. As a class, my people are to-day restricted to the formulated knowledge of books treating of the economic activities of your civilization. Exercise in these activities out of which these books grow and by which you have been developed, is denied us. And yet many of you are surprised that we do not possess the social efficiency which is

the effect of this exercise. The most serious feature of our condition in this country to-day is the lack of opportunity to engage in work which requires knowledge, thought and skill.

As the poor man in the midst of wealth feels his poverty all the more keenly, so the northern colored laborer, living in the section of discovery, invention, commercial enterprise, and all the other myriad forms of Yankee ingenuity, realizes more keenly this lack of economic opportunity. It is also observable that the benumbing and degrading effects of this deprivation are more pronounced in him by reason of this environment.

It does seem to me that the necessity to train the colored laborers in the North would follow also from considerations like the following:

1. The surest and quickest way, if not the only way, for him to get a working knowledge of your civilization is through systematic and continuous work in the scientific processes and with the devices, machinery, apparatus and the like, which are the useful applications of the formulated knowledge of your civilization. Or, if you please, in this way only can he learn to work your farm profitably to you and gain thereby the requisite knowledge and skill to eventually work his own farm. (I know there are people who, having read a book on electricity, think they can run an electric plant, but the man who owns such a plant never thinks so.) This is the way the colored laborer of the North can catch the spirit of progress and thrift of the present day, and by skill, dexterity and excellence make the profits of his labor purchase other and better opportunities. Unless he is allowed the benefits of such training he will remain, as now, in the procession of your progress, but out of step.

2. Training in the economic activities of your civilization will best enable the northern colored laborer to discover in work other returns than the wage. Such, for instance, as the satisfaction of having done a piece of work well, and the highest reward of all, the development which comes by reaction to the worker. At present he sees only the wage and takes the shortest cut to obtain it. Sometimes I wonder if you fully realize the amount of friction between us which this short-cut method is producing. It causes you serious vexations and it is lessening daily our opportunities for even unskilled labor. I tremble with anxiety when I think of the possible end to which this may lead.

3. The saddest and possibly the most serious feature of this lack of economic opportunity is the effect on the children of the laborer. Fancy a child pursuing a course of instruction every concept of which has been built up by another race and from first hand facts, about which neither his parents nor his playmates know anything. This fact simply paralyzes the vital principle in education of apperception.

In this connection, let me testify that if ever there was a man sent of God to a needy people at the psychological moment, Booker T. Washington is one. And I would further testify that the support which the white people have given him is to-day the rainbow of promise that the door of hope will not be closed to the brother in black. Christian industrial Tuskegee, under a corps of colored executive officers and colored teachers, is to-day the most potent force at work in our development in this country. It was the realization of the importance of contact with these first-hand facts that led the Friends to establish at Cheyney, two years ago, a normal school which will supply these first-hand facts in the classroom.

We are further insisting, in this connection, at Cheyney, that the present condition of the colored people makes it necessary that the school teacher be able to give helpful precept and practice along all the lines of every-day activity. For many years to come the colored teacher will find parents' meetings a field for vital usefulness, almost as large and important as that of his school. Nicely prepared essays and speeches will not avail in these meetings; the developing influence for these meetings consists of the teacher's ability to actually perform, after the most approved and economic methods, the every-day activities of the housewife and the husbandman.

In conclusion, I wish to say that those of us who regret most the lack of these opportunities bear no malice to you, never dream of despair, and are firmly convinced that we shall secure a "free hand, fair field and a hearty God-speed" in these opportunities some day only by deserving them through our own activity and our own spirit of love. In this spirit would I remind you that you are the truant officers who have brought us into your own school, and beseech you in the name of our common Master and your sense of fair play to teach us after the laboratory method.